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Death as a Way of Life: The Increasing Resort to Homicide in a Maya Indian Community[1]

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The breaking-down of a social-control system based on belief in the guardianship of the spiritual ancestors and their temporal agents, the curers, is reflected in a rising homicide rate as people turn to individual sanctions when threatened. The acts of homicide differ in their social significance according to who is killed, the context, the agency, and the motivation of the killer. Thirty-seven homicides between 1938 and 1965, analysed in terms of these component variables, reflect the conflicts arising from competition in new economic enterprises, the rising suspicion of curers' abuse of their supernatural power, and the loss of belief in the guardianship of the ancestors.

THE social impact of homicide has caused some analysts[2] to treat it and its supposed inverted complement, suicide, as one kind of behavior with a single meaning, ignoring Durkheim's caveat that behavioral rubrics categorize diverse phenomena. Here I shall analyze the variety of strategies involved in killing in a Mexican community, which I shall call Teklum (the Tzeltal term for village), and endeavor to show how rules of behavior are expressed in killing and in attempts to avoid being killed. Further, I shall endeavor to point out what these indicate about structural and organizational changes both within the community and in its relations with the wider society. Since suicide is absent, except for a single case of a madman, I have restricted my enquiry to homicide.

Teklum is a predominantly Indian township of Mexico. The population of the town center—about 1,900—includes only one Ladino, or non-Indian, family, that of the schoolteacher. The sense of community is limited to people living in the center and in the four nearby hamlets (*barrios*).

The town center is divided physically and socially into two endogamous sections, called "upper" and "lower." The outlying hamlets are linked to the nearest section by social and economic ties. The civil and religious posts of the town are, in local theory, apportioned evenly between the sections. This was in fact true until the 1950's, for each of the ranked posts had a paired complement, so that both sides of the dual division were represented, and the single posts of president and *síndico* (the president's administrative assistant) were al-

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632 It is in the context of these structural divisions that social change and its behavioral indices must be analyzed.

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182 Homicide—an act viewed as a delict in national Mexican law—has in the past two decades become an accepted strategy in social interaction. It is part of the expectations of the society upon which members predicate their own code of behavior and in terms of which
[626] they react to others. Gossip not only fails to
[521] suppress homicide, but serves to create a con-
[764] sensual base for condoning it. The corpse is referred to as "the one who had the guilt," *?a stukel smul*, and even when knowledge of the particular act is lacking, certain assumptions are made: the killer was someone in the community; the victim provoked the killer. In listing crimes, informants sometimes failed to
682 674 [124] mention killing, or they included it after witchcraft, theft, or adultery. Homicide is considered a *reaction* to crime, not a crime in itself.

The rate is phenomenally high—up to 251.2 per 100,000 (when adjusted to bring the whole township's population of a little over 3,000 to the base for measuring international rates)—and it is increasing. This compares with national rates of 4.8 for the United States, 31.9 for Mexico (United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1964), and 36.2 for a nearby town (Favre 1964).

The following tabulation summarizes the homicides by decades since 1915, the earliest date for which records are available.

1915–1924	4
1925–1934	5
1935–1944	19
1945–1954	9
1955–1964	35

[114] Figures prior to 1950 are not apt to be accurate, for only since that time have there been adequate reporting and checking of township records. In the following tabulation, the marked increase in the annual number of homicides since 1960 represents a real increase.

1950	1	1958	1
1951	0	1959	1
1952	1	1960	4
1953	1	1961	7
1954	1	1962	6
1955	0	1963	7
1956	1	1964	4
1957	4	1965	9

682 674 121 In order to assess the meaning of its remarkable increase during the 1960's, I have pro-

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ceeded along two lines of enquiry. First, I have analyzed the circumstances surrounding the deaths in as many cases as my informants could remember. Variations in the components of homicidal acts—the setting, agents, purpose, and outcome—suggested the different assumptions underlying each case. Secondly, I have correlated the different kinds of homicide with structural and organizational changes in the community. The analysis of cases in Section I summarizes the patterned components of behavior. The social environment providing the cues to the actors is explored in Section II.

I. THE PATTERNED COMPONENTS OF 37 HOMICIDE CASES[3]

The following tabulations and discussion are based on the 37 cases presented in Table 1.

Who Is Killed

Sex:	all male	
Age:	18–22	5
	27–30	7
	34–38	7
	42–48	8
	50	3
	60	2
	65	2
	70	2
	??	1
Occupation:	curer	8
	political leader	1
	farmer	28

One-half the total number of killings occurred to those between the ages of 34 to 50. However, as the six victims aged 60 and over indicate, survival to a late age does not ensure that one will die a nonviolent death. The age of the victim may be correlated with motive, insofar as some events leading to conflict occur only at certain times in the life cycle. Thus, betrothal conflicts involved only young men, while victims accused of witchcraft were older: 27 was the age of the youngest, and 16 out of the 18 men killed as witches were over 34. Cattle theft, on the other hand, occurred throughout the age range.

Eight of the victims—more than one-fifth of them—were curers, a much higher proportion than their share in the total population, for there are only about a dozen now living in the town center of 1,900.

There is a personality type recognized by the community as distinctive of those who "get

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682 156 themselves killed." When they see a man who is abusive while drunk, who brags of his power and of that of his animal spirit, they will remark: "That man is going to wake up dead" (*sakubk'inal čamel*). When such a man is killed, no one complains, even among his immediate relatives (cases 5, 10, 14, 16, 19, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 31, and 32 are of this type). When I asked [562] why women do not get killed, the response was, "They don't look for trouble" (*mo sleik smul*).

682 *Setting*

	Total	*Dawn*	*Afternoon*	*Evening*	*Night*	*??*
Streets of town	11				11	
Milpa, woods, road out of town	10	2	3	2	2	1
Highway	4		1	1	1	1
In cantina	3		1		2	
In houseyard	3			1	2	
In bed	1				1	
Neighboring hamlets & towns	2		1			1
??	3					3
Total	37	2	6	4	19	6

Where the killing takes place and its timing in the diurnal cycle are directly linked. All of the homicides in the streets of the town were committed at night, while those in the roads out of town near the milpa occurred in the late afternoon or evening. In providing privacy and security from discovery, the darkness of night is functionally equivalent to distance from the 682 town center during the daytime. When I sug- 114 gested that the killings might be reduced if the town would connect the lights that had been installed in the streets, the response was that when they had been in use, killings had increased. The lights helped the killer find his victim, perhaps lying out in the road after a drinking session. He would shoot out the light and then kill his victim.

682 579 The only killings in which considerations of space or time were ignored were those in the cantina during a drunken brawl, for in contrast to the usual killing their onset was unpremeditated.

682 [527] [579] The timing of homicide is related also to the annual cycle: 14 homicides occurred during the fiestas in the town or in a neighboring town. The drunkenness of the fiestas provides an appropriate occasion for killing an enemy, although a drunken brawl is in itself rarely a [755] sufficient motive (two cases). Other opportune [273] times are after a curing ceremony (six cases) and after the gathering of curers during an

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epidemic (two cases), when people have drunk a great deal and their motive is fresh in their mind.

The settings in which homicides occur indicate that a killer is expressing not his own bravery but rather his fears. Wounds are frequently inflicted from the rear, and often the victim is outnumbered and set upon by a group. The victim is sometimes invited to drink with his killer(s), and in this session he is disarmed psychologically and physically. Alcohol reduces the chance of his effective reaction, and this is important when a knife or machete is used. Shotgun killings are done at a distance and do not require this tactic, although it may still be employed. For drinking serves to reduce the killer's own fears. Drink "heats the blood" and makes unusual behavior possible. One killer, in recounting his act, was not trying to prove bravery, but rather his own good judgment and cool-headedness. The killer fired at the victim while he was sleeping, his back turned to the door, and killed him. The shot also entered the arm of the sleeping man's wife. She saw the killer as he left the scene, but testified in court that she had seen no one. She was, in effect, accepting his verdict that her husband was a witch.[4] This homicide was not regarded by the killer or by anyone else as a heroic act, nor was the killer in recounting it attempting to emphasize anything other than the necessity of the act.

Instrumentality: Weapons and Wounds

gun	14
machete	6
gun and machete	4
knife	3
knife and gun	1
knife and machete	1
knife and stone	1
hatchet	1
nail	1
sandals	1
??	4

The variety of weapons reduces the question of any technological determinism to a minimum. The actual weapon used seems to be a matter of convenience. When more than one is used, it is usually evidence that the assailant had helpers. The nail is unusual. It was hammered into the jaws of a man who had entered the curing profession at an age considered too young. The attack on the jaws of the victim seems related to the power of speech and to the

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TABLE 1. CASE ANALYSIS OF HOMICIDES OCCURRING FROM 1938 TO 1965
(AS RECALLED FROM MEMORY BY THREE INFORMANTS)*

CASE No.	DATE	AGE	WEAPON	WOUNDS	PLACE	TIME	SUSPECTS	MOTIVE	OUTCOME
1	1938—fiesta in neighboring town	50	pistol, machete	head cut off	in brotherhood yard of borrowed house in neighboring town	afternoon	?	Accused of witchcraft	No one apprehended.
2	1945	65	pistol	shot between eyes	in street	night	two drinking companions (relatives of victim)	Drunken quarrel	Two companions went to jail. While in jail, with help of witch from neighboring town, set fire to four houses in pueblo.
3	1946	48	machete (brothers disarmed him of shotgun)	?	road at outskirts of town, at cross	dawn (5 A.M.)	brothers: 1 elder, 2 younger	Curer, suspected of being witch.	One brother went to jail for five years.
4	1946	45	machete	well chopped up	neighboring hamlet	?	?	"I don't know what crime he had. He was a curer."	No one went to jail.
5	1946—fiesta San Francisco	38	machete and gun	well cut up, head and neck	in woods	?	?	Accused of witchcraft.	No one complained.
6	1946	50	shotgun	?	in street	night, after curing ceremony, very drunk	?	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	Wife complained, but no witness.
7	1948	27	nail	in throat	in street	night, after curing ceremony	father of boy who died of witchcraft	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	Before dying, victim revealed name of killer, but local authorities would not arrest him. Case went to higher court, but no witnesses.
8	1960—11/28	60	machete	cut off head	in street	night, after curing ceremony	son-in-law	Accused of witchcraft by curer at ceremony for daughter.	Son-in-law fled town.
9	1960—12/18 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	28	knife, machete	heart, throat, stomach	?	?	killer paid by cattle owners	Stole cattle.	Released killer on bail of 2,500 pesos paid by cattle owners.

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10	1960—12/18 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	60	shotgun	shot in back—bullet entered lung	houseyard, two feet from house	7 P.M., after curing ceremony	brother-in-law	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	No one apprehended.
11	1961—6/16	70	machete	many wounds	near highway	9 P.M., after gathering of curers	neighbors	Curer, accused by other curers of being witch causing epidemic.	Neighbors were not identified.
12	1961	33	shotgun	shot in back	highway	?	leader of political independance movement (wife's brother)	Refused to pay tribute to independence leaders.	Killer's wife (victim's sister) left husband. No one jailed. Later, killer killed by victim's brother (case 18).
13	1961—7/26 fiesta in neighboring hamlet	30	?	?	street, near cantina	late at night	wife's brother	Very abusive, fought drunks.	Wife's brother fled town.
14	1961—10/24 fiesta in neighboring hamlet	45	knife	many wounds	?	?	neighbors	Accused of being witch by neighbors.	No one apprehended.
15	1961—12/15 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	37	gun	?	cantina	late at night	?	Accused of witchcraft.	Wife agreed he was witch.
16	1962—9/25	18	?	?	?	?	rival for girl	Fought over girl.	No one accused.
17	1962—9/25	20	knife	stabs	in street	night (1 A.M.)	cattle owners	Accused of stealing cattle.	Went to jail, but released on bail put up by cattle owners.
18	1962—9/26	35	gun	shot in head	highway	(4 P.M.)	brother-in-law's brother	Revenge—victim had killed his own brother-in-law (case 17).	Killer declared he had killed. Paid fine and went free.
19	1962—11/15 fiesta, All Saints	30	knife, gun	stabbed in heart and shot	drinking in cantina	late at night	rival for girl	Fought over girl.	No one accused.
20	1962—12/24 fiesta, Christmas Eve	50	gun	shot between eyes	road outside town	dawn (6 A.M.)	leader of cattle association	Accused of stealing cattle.	?
21	1963—4/4	36	hatchet	head	in woods, given drink by killers	5 P.M.	?	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	No one apprehended. Brother did some investigating.
22	1963—7/24	45	?	?	in bed	night, after curing ceremony	Curer from neighboring town	Victim had accused suspect of being a witch when curing a patient.	Nothing.

* Two more homicides were recalled for 1964 than official records show. They must probably occurred in a previous year.

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TABLE 1 (*Cont.*)

Case No.	Date	Age	Weapon	Wounds	Place	Time	Suspects	Motive	Outcome
23	1963—8/28 fiesta, San Augustin	?	sandals	kicked to death	in cantina	afternoon	drinking companions	Barroom brawl	One of two assailants arrested, bailed out.
24	1963—9/25	70	shotgun	forehead	in field	late afternoon	sons of man whom he was accused of having killed by witchcraft	Accused by curers in neighboring towns of having caused sickness.	Nothing.
25	1964—1/2 fiesta, New Years	30	machete, gun	?	street outside house of new president	night (11 P.M.)	killer paid by brothers	Accused of stealing cattle.	Brother fled, but was jailed when he returned.
26	1964—3/3 Carnival	34	gun, machete	chopped up with machete	street, one block from house	night (11 P.M.)	?	Accused of witchcraft by neighbors.	No one accused.
27	1964—5/11	30	gun	forehead	highway	afternoon	Ladino liquor distiller, not of community	Victim had denounced distiller to federal authorities.	No one accused.
28	1964—9/1	30	gun	?	milpa, after his brothers gave him drink	afternoon	his brothers	Accused of witchcraft	One brother fled. The other was jailed but claimed the first one did it.
29	1964-9/14	65	knives	many knife wounds	street, three blocks from house	late at night, after gathering of curers	curers	Curer, accused by other curers of being witch causing epidemic.	No one accused.
30	1964	22	?	?	eight meters from his house	night (1 A.M.)	close friend, hired by cattle owners, brothers of killer	Accused of stealing cattle.	Freed on bail.
31	1965—2/14	42	machete	head cut off	road to neighboring hamlet	night (3 A.M.)	?—at first thought it was wood spirit, until they found head	?	No one accused.
32	1965—2/22	45	knife, stone	stabbed in heart, head bashed	street near house	night	?	Accused of witchcraft by neighbors.	No one accused.
33	1965—3/31 Carnival	45	shotgun	?	street	night	?	Accused of witchcraft.	No one apprehended.

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34	1965 4/24	37	gun	?	found in woods, body dragged there from town	night (1 a.m.)	brother-in-law	He had relations with 14-year-old sister-in-law. When he tried reconciliation, became drunk, abusive.	No witness, no blood found in in-laws' house.
35	1965 5/30 finca, just below San Francisco	35	shotgun	three shots entered back	road	afternoon	?	Stole cattle, corn.	Killer left note saying old man did it, but no one believed it.
36	1965 8/13	42	machete	head severed, side wounds	road to milpa	6 P.M.	son by first marriage	Failed to help son get a wife; accused by dying wife of causing her death by witchcraft.	Widow spread rumors that it was his son, but refused to testify.
37	1965—10/?	30	shotgun	back	in houseyard	6 P.M.	rival for girl	Accident—killer mistook him for his brother, who was challenging killer's suit for a girl.	?

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682 794 756 location of the soul, *sč'ulel*, in the tongue, *yat*, wherein lies the particular power of the curer. This possibly suggested the mode of attack.

682 411 412 [223] [224] The instruments used to kill are carried by the farmers of this area most of the time. The men go to their milpa with a machete strapped to their side, a shotgun slung over their shoulder, and sometimes even a knife stuck in their waistband. They frequently interrupt work to hunt birds, rabbits, and deer. The shotgun does not excite suspicion or comment when it is seen. The men of Teklum are technologically prepared to kill in the course of an ordinary day's work.

682 [152] [683] The number of wounds and the thoroughness with which the job is done (see Table 1) suggest not so much the fury of the assailants as the fear motivating their act. In a witch-killing, it appears to be thought necessary to hack up the victim completely so that his power is effectively ended: one witch was cut into 32 pieces; another had 166 wounds.

682 674 656 The death acts drawn up in the local courthouse have been increasingly specific in their statements as to the wounds inflicted ever since the government's intervention in the case of an accidental death in 1950. The local authorities were threatened with a fine of 600 pesos if the details were not properly recorded. The careful measurement of the body in relation to the road and to neighboring milpas and the measurement of the size and depth of the wounds provide the screen of complicity that wards off further investigation by federal authorities and preserves local independence. There is never any questioning of suspects or attempt to solve the crime by officials. The success of the ploy is illustrated in the following account:

> Pedro had animals at the spring and had gone out early with ropes in his bag to lasso them. He was found with a rope tied around his neck hung from a *čibinib* tree. We went out and measured the length and thickness of the rope and how many centimeters it penetrated his neck. We put all these facts in the report, which gave the cause of death as suicide.
>
> At that time we had a schoolteacher in town who asked the dead man's wife why the town didn't investigate who killed him because someone must have done it. He went with the widow to the Ministerio Publico in the capital. Well, when they came out, there were all the facts in the death act. [Informant laughed heartily as he recalled this success.] He saw that we had discovered the body at 3 P.M., that the rope was 15 meters

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682 674 656 long, and that the body was suspended 35 centimeters from the ground. He saw that we had raised the act well, and nothing was done.

682 562 *Who Kills and Why*

The only universal factor among the killers is sex—only men kill (Table 2). Women do not kill nor are they killed in Teklum. This does not mean that they are not subject to as many tensions or abuses as men, or that these have no channels for expression. Women work through men by agitating them to homicide. [593] Sometimes revenge is delayed, for the agents chosen by women may be children who must reach maturity before accomplishing the deed (see case 36, in which the son's animosity toward his father was kindled at his mother's deathbed).

682 683 621 Neighbors are a significant group in witchcraft killing. (Neighbors may be listed in Table 2 under another relationship, for instance as brother-in-law or as cattle owner.) They are the informal judges of suspected witches, and it is frequently they who kill a man considered to be a witch. When the curers accuse a man of causing epidemics, his neighbors are usually the executors. For this reason, [608] most people try to neutralize the hostility of

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their neighbors by establishing *compadrazgo*, or godparental, relations with them.

Ten of the 37 homicides here reported were committed by immediate consanguineal or affinal relatives of the victim. The high frequency of killings involving brothers or brothers-in-law (8 cases) suggests a locus of high tension in these relationships. Male siblings, the *yermanotak*, comprise the closest cooperating group. Cooperation between brothers is obligatory when wheat is to be threshed, a house built, or a roof rethatched. If a brother or brother-in-law is unavoidably absent, he must pay a substitute. Brothers, or sons and fathers, are the only relationship pairs who work the milpa in common and share the harvest. Bilateral inheritance, with equal division of land and house to both male and female offspring, means that brothers-in-law are potentially equivalent in the competition for goods as well as in their obligation to cooperate. A man kills his sister's husband if the husband is abusive to the woman or to members of the family (two cases). The brother figures not only as a lethal opponent, but also as the man who avenges one's own death (case 18, Table 1). When someone has been killed for witchcraft, his brothers are expected to accept the verdict or to avenge the killing.

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TABLE 2. SUSPECT, BY MOTIVE FOR HOMICIDE

	Brother	Brother-in-law	Son	Son-in-law	Neighbors	Relative of witch-craft killing	Cattle	Rival for girl	Drunkenness	Not of community	?	Total
[688] Victim was accused of witchcraft	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	9	15
Victim accused suspect of witchcraft	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
[685] Cattle theft	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	3
[578] Rivalry over girl	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Abusive behavior	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
[579] Drunken quarrel	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2
[627] Avenge a death (not caused by witchcraft)	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Political conflict	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
??	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Total	3	4	1	1	2	2	1	4	1	2	2	11	34

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cept the verdict or to avenge the killing.

In selecting a single motive in categorizing the killer and the reason for his act, I have distorted reality more than in the other tabulations. Motivations include both the instrumental reason and the rationalization for the act. The complexity of motivation is correlated with the multiplicity of social ties existing between any two people. For example, when a man shoots his father for failure to provide him with his bride price, but feels justified and expects social approval because his mother on her deathbed accused the father of having provoked her illness by witchcraft (case 36, Table 1), it is impossible to assign a single primary cause. However, in order to correlate the factors of agent and motive, I have been forced to select only a single feature in categorizing them.

In one-half of all the cases reported, the motive attributed for homicide is suspicion of witchcraft. (Whether or not witchcraft is ever practiced here is irrelevant since men act in terms of their interpretation of an event, not of the event itself.) Almost all sickness in the community is believed to be caused by witchcraft (the term for witch and witchcraft, *?ak'?awel*, means "giver of sickness"). The family of a sick person consults the local curers, who pulse the patient. The witch "has left his signature in the blood" of the patient, and by pulsing him the curer can "hear and feel" who the witch is. His procedure is to ask the patient to tell what troubles he has had with his neighbors and relatives, and as the patient recites the names of the people with whom he has had conflict, the pulse jumps. As in the use of the lie detector, this indicates where there is high affect; in Teklum it is interpreted as positive indicator of the guilty person, the witch. If the curer gets drunk enough, he may reveal the name of the witch, but he usually prefers not to—I know of at least three cases, one of which is reported here, in which the man who announced the name of the witch was killed by the person he accused. The family may then check the consultation with curers in neighboring towns or even in the departmental capital. Since these distant curers are not inhibited by fear of the witch, they name the guilty one. The family, or the patient, may broadcast their suspicions, even announcing the consultation over the loudspeakers in the local liquor shops. If the patient dies, a member of the family may act on

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these suspicions and kill the witch. If he should kill the witch while the patient is still alive, it is believed that the patient will die.

Killing men for cattle theft (six cases) is a relatively recent occurrence. It has put homicide on the market: the associations of cattle-owners have hired killers in three of the six cases. In addition to the killer's fee, they pay the fine to release him from prison. Fines for homicide have increased in the past five years—from 1,000 to 3,000 pesos—but not sufficiently to price the murder of cattle thieves out of the market. A good bull is worth 1,500 pesos, and the threat of further loss by theft seems to justify the expenditure of fees and fines. When the cattle-owners lose some of their herd, they go to spiritualists or to San Miguel, the talking saint of Ixtapa, to find out who did the stealing. Since such evidence does not hold up in court, legal settlement is not attempted. Legal action, moreover, would create an enemy who might seek revenge. A Ladino secretary of the town center who had lost a bull accused a man of stealing his cattle and demanded 500 pesos in compensation. By receiving the money he jeopardized his safety, and eventually he had to leave town.

The Resolution of the Case

It is nearly impossible to find witnesses to homicide. Of these 37 cases, 28 resulted in no action being taken by the authorities, and in five cases where the killers went to jail, they were released with the payment of minimal fines. In the calculations of the townspeople, it is hardly worth risking one's neck to get such a minimal revenge.

However, this does not mean that homicide goes unnoticed in the community. After a killing the widow sings of the life of the dead man. If she is in agreement with the verdict arrived at by the killer and others, she will deny knowledge of what he has done, or even suggest that she too was aware of what harm he has caused (one widow implied that her husband, killed as a witch, was responsible for the death of four of her six children). If she objects to the verdict, she sings of what a good man he was and how blameless. She will then air her own suspicions in the following weeks as to who killed her husband.

Following the funeral, when the women have left the cemetary, the men sit at the grave. As they measure out a liter of liquor and pass it around, they advance hypotheses as

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682 683 627 to who did it. The consultations with curers prior to the death of the supposed victims of a witch will be introduced as evidence. (Some degree of consensus may have been built up beforehand, in witch-killings, by the public broadcast of accusations noted above.[9]) The focus of the discussion is not so much on who killed the dead man, but whether he was indeed a witch. This kind of mock trial occurs [153] after every funeral, since it must be decided [152] who caused the sickness. Emotions run very [275] high as the liquor is passed around, and accusations are made, sometimes against those present. It was after a funeral that one man killed his son (not included in Table 1) for accusing him of having caused the death of the son's child, who was being buried.

682 [52] In the weeks following a homicide, it is discussed at all the drinking sessions in the homes or in the town hall. Eventually an authoritative version begins to emerge. Those who have defended the victim then keep silent, and the 682 683 affair "rests in peace." Avenging the death of a man judged to have been a witch, so far as I [627] know, has never been done. In one case (no. 36, Table 1) the widow of a man killed as a witch vigorously denied the legitimacy of the act and built up a case against the killer. She spread word that it was without doubt the dead man's son by a prior marriage. When the son was killed shortly after (case 37, Table 1), everyone assumed that he had been killed by the widow's son by *her* prior marriage. However, the authoritative version concerning the second killing was that it was an accident: he had been mistaken for his brother, whom the killer was after because of rivalry over a girl.

682 183 *Rules for Surviving*

The patterning of the selection of victims and the circumstances of homicide provide the basis for formulating a set of rules that can 682 ensure survival. The long-range rules of sur- 539 vival, in the words of an elder at the occasion of 183 the death of his godchild, are:

lekon kak'o ta kwenta me?tat
I pay respect to my elders.

hun ku kikts'in kalničan
[601] I greet my younger brothers and my children (classificatory extension of kinship terms).

spisil kak' ta kwenta
To all I give respect.

ha? hil lekotik. Ma taltik milel ma taltik čamel

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682 539 783

Thus I fare well. I have not been killed, nor have I been sick.

682 156 828

A good man is of one heart, and he shows it by his humility, *ben k'un yo?tan* or "very soft heart." He can drink with friends on either side of the dual division of the town, and he is called upon in many household fiestas to greet the guests of the house-owner.

But the man who is "very strong of heart," *ben toyol yo?tan*, who "fails to take people into account," *ma ?awa ta kwenta*, who "abuses people," *me ya wul*, has means of survival despite the many threats to his life. He surrounds himself with a circle of *compadres*, or godparents; he especially picks out curers, both to mitigate the use of their power against him, and for them to serve as intermediaries if he should have enemies with animal spirits. When a threat becomes imminent, he may stay within his house or limit his range of activities to a very circumscribed area, always taking a weapon when he does go out. He will usually try to limit his drinking, or give it up entirely. These short-range rules of avoidance are clearly indicated by the circumstances in which killings occur: in the hills or at night, when the victim is under the influence of liquor.

[608] [756] [273]

682 [578]

These 37 cases of homicide reveal a regularity in the kinds of people and situations involved. The victims are most often men who assert power, principally curers, or men who violate standards of behavior by abusiveness or theft. Their killers are often linked to them by kinship or neighborhood, the bonds in which tensions are greatest. The regularity of time and place of homicide suggests the precautions that can be taken to avoid being killed if one has an enemy. The general failure of the community social-control agents to bring negative sanctions against a killer indicates that homicide is an accepted solution for interpersonal conflict. The structural setting that validates this behavior is discussed below.

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II. STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

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Case analysis, useful for discerning certain patterns, is inadequate for understanding the interrelationships among a variety of social changes in the community. An increasing rate of homicide of this magnitude indicates fundamental changes in the social matrix in which individual decisions are made: it suggests not

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682 only a rise in the tensions that provoke con-
178 flict, but an undermining of the social-control
121 mechanisms for channeling them. The percep-
626 tion of these changes by the members of the society makes for shifts in the individual calculi, grossly measured in changes in the rate of
[128] behavior. In order to understand the interrelated problems of the sources of the increasing tensions and the reasons homicide is chosen as a means of resolving them, I have reconstructed the course of social change in the period from 1935 to 1965.

178 *Increasing Social Tensions*

556 New economic enterprises have increased wealth differences in the community. The best measure of this is in the increase in cattle-holding, which is a socially approved way of spending money. Twenty-five years ago, there were only a half-dozen men with cattle, and they had only one or two head each. Today,
178 one of the herders in the community has 200
233 head of cattle, and 75 percent of the households
556 have one or more each.

Cattle-herding is a "new" industry in the sense that instead of just having a team of oxen to help with agricultural labor, men are
233 breeding cattle for profit. Because the cattle
685 roam freely, there is much loss, and this leads to accusations of theft. I have never heard such accusations directed against anyone outside the community; crime as well as positive moral relationships is confined within the
682 boundaries of this corporate community. Sus-
685 pected cattle thieves are killed by the cattle-
[474] owner or by a killer hired by the cooperative of cattle-owners. Such killings account for six of the 37 cases analyzed above (Table 1).

178 The illicit distilling of liquor has also added
274 to the town's prosperity. The liquor industry was introduced about 15 years ago, but the number of distillers has increased from 5 to 40
[438] in the last five years. From an enterprise
[439] formerly meeting only local market needs, contraband liquor is now sold as far away as
274 the coastal area and across the border in
474 Guatemala. A cooperative of distillers has reduced the frictions that immediately followed the introduction of liquor-distilling. The cooperative pays the fines of any member caught distilling, and in addition threatens to use group action against informers, who were formerly tempted to earn the 200 pesos offered
[578] by federal agents. But the envy aroused by the sight of those who profit from this enterprise,

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as with the cattle industry, is a covert cause for personal attacks on other grounds.

A third enterprise, trucking, has caused a realignment of political interests in factions associated with two truck-owning cooperatives. Membership in one of the cooperatives, or patronage of one of the two trucks, arouses the enmity of members of the other cooperative. Several threats have been made on the lives of the owners and the operators, but the only damage done has been to tires.

The tensions resulting from the introduction of these new enterprises cannot be fully measured by the deaths attributed to direct economic conflict. Wealth differences resulting from the new enterprises excite envy, and with it come accusations of witchcraft. In this community, witchcraft killing does not perform the normative function of reducing wealth differentiation that Kluckhohn saw operating among the Navaho (1944), since it is the poor man who is killed as a witch, not the rich man. The slaying of the envious witch exacerbates the economic differentiation that provides the seedbed for conflict.

Another new source of tension is found in the growing demand for political leadership or even independence from the township by the *ejido* colonies formed since land reform went into effect in 1937. The inept maneuvers of two founders of the ejido colonies in hot country resulted in two homicides (cases 12 and 18 in Table 1).[8] The increasing strength of these hamlets will mean that more attempts will be made in the future to gain political equality and/or independence. Whether this will result in increasing homicides will depend on social-control agencies external to the Indian communities.

Homicide occurring as a direct result of economic and political competition represents a new strategy in the community. The decision to kill rather than to use other negative sanctions is related to the social-control mechanisms discussed below.

Changing Mechanisms of Social Control

A system of social control rests not only on the exercise of negative sanctions, but on the sense of personal security derived from confidence in the institutions of control. In Teklum, the maintenance of control was formerly centered in the guardianship against malevolent spirits held by the ancestor spirits and the curers. The "police force," made up of ten

756 539 [swayobel]." "What one?" asked his friend. "You won't be afraid?" asked J. And then he put his shirt and hat on the floor, spoke three words (my friend didn't say what), and raised his hat and shirt, and a horse appeared. He did this again and a bull appeared. He was a great *?ak'čamal* [witch]. He stole a great deal. He was killed by five bullets.

• [682]

756 [152] Such stories of curers "who walk on both sides" (*ṭbe?en ta ča mehč*) are favorites in the drinking sessions of Teklum. The power of curers inspires fear, so much so that some of the town presidents have been afraid of putting them in prison.

756 776 [133] [769] The open competition between curers serves to undermine the faith of the people in their guardianship function. This function was believed to have been acquired by the leaders from the *me?tiktatik*, the ancestors, who were said to live in a cave in a hill near the town, from which came the progenitors of the present townspeople. To carry out this guardianship function, the animal spirits of the two leading curers roamed the streets at night, when the evil spirits were out, each one remaining within the limits of his own side of the dual division. In this role, the two major curers were called the *me?iltatiletik*, a term derived from the one referring to the ancestors.

178 776 756 769 [796] 796 776 756 178 769 The loss of faith in the guardianship function of the curers was coincident with the loss of belief in the presence of the me?tiktatik. Some deny that the me?tiktatik live in the cave anymore, and others say they just appear on the day of their fiesta, the Day of the Cross in the Catholic calendar. This fiesta formerly was an important event in establishing the guardian power of the leader curers, since they were the only ones who dared enter the cave and talk to the ancestors. But this fear and this belief have gone. In 1960 one young man of the pueblo entered the cave on the day of the fiesta, when the curers were "deceiving the people" in claiming that they were talking to the ancestors; the fact that he dared enter the cave indicates an ambient distrust (in part resulting from verbal attacks by the priest, who at that time was gaining more power in the town). By now, on the Day of the Cross the church and civil officials, the women prayermakers, and an assistant of the priest, the *fiscal*, go to the cave, but the curers are no longer present, even as bystanders. The curers have tried to buttress belief in the guardianship of the ancestors by claiming that a nephew of the ancestors is now in residence in

[794] [793]

178 756 769

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178 the cave and that they are in communication
756 with him. But these claims are met with ex-
769 pressions of disbelief by the people. Almost everyone is convinced not only that the curers do not now talk with the ancestors, but that the ancestors no longer look over them from the watchout hill outside their cave.

756 The loss of control by the curers is drama-
178 tized in the long passage quoted above con-
731 trasting the past and present treatment of epidemics. Formerly the two leaders of the curers consulted together and announced to the president that they had rid the town of evil. Now the curers as a group are ordered to come before the civil authority. There, in a [273] long examination called *?it yo?tan*—"taking the heart"—in which 18 liters of liquor are consumed, the assembled curers and civil authorities decide who among them is responsible for bringing in the witchcraft that is causing the epidemic. Later in the evening, [682] one of the curers is usually killed (cases 11 and 29, Table 1).

756 *(2) Conflict between the curers and the civil*
578 *authority*. The competition between the curers and the civil authority can be traced in a series of incidents beginning in the '30's and culminating in an open confrontation in the spring of 1966.

756 The first incident occurred in 1932, when
578 the town was still part of the neighboring
682 Ladino township:

683 F went and asked permission of the authorities to
[632] kill his enemy, a curer, who he thought was bewitching his brother-in-law. The president went to the house of the suspected witch with the order to imprison him. He said they were going to take him to the neighboring township center to put him in jail. The group of authorities set off with the suspected witch. On the way, another group met them and asked them where they were going. The president replied, "To H." The group that had encountered them asked if they would like a drink to heat their body. They gave one cup, and then another. Then they cut up the suspected witch with a machete and put his body in the cave of the ancestors. When the widow enquired the next day where her husband was, the president said that the man must have gone to the finca.

The ambush by the killers was prearranged in the town court, and the president covered their deed when questions were asked.

[622] In 1940, the leading curer of the lower section was president. When he killed a man who

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accused him of being a witch, he was put in the local jail by the judge and then removed to the departmental capital. During his term of imprisonment an epidemic broke out in the town; it was attributed to witchcraft supposedly practiced by him and by two other curers who remained in town. These two were then imprisoned. After they were set free, all three men were killed in different episodes involving accusations of witchcraft. Permission to act as executioners was granted by the civil authority.

In the past, the public review of a case before a killing probably served to minimize homicide, since permission was not always granted. Since 1953, when a large highway first linked the town to the departmental capital and communication between this center of justice and the local township increased, the civil authority has not given permission, and prior review of witchcraft cases occurs only with epidemics.

The final incident in which the civil authority confronted the curers occurred in the spring of 1966. The president accused one of the curers of cutting short his life by lighting candles in the mountains. The curers were called together to hear the threat and to go to the hill to look at the evidence. The accused curer remained at home pleading that he was sick. He was warned not to pursue his witchcraft, and as yet there has been no use of violence on either side. This open confrontation without the use of violence may indicate a change in the strategy of conflict with the growing power of the president.

(3) *Breakdown of the dual division.* The loss of internal controls in the curing profession and the conflict for power and control by the civil officials and the curers are related to a more fundamental change in the social structure of the community. Formerly the division of the town into two sections provided a channel for opposition as well as cooperation. Recruitment into leadership positions in both the civil hierarchy and the curing hierarchy was based upon residence. The system provided checks and balances in the exercise of power, for the two principales—one from each section of the dual division—were supposed to act as watchdogs over the curers. The shift in the locus of social control from the principales to the president has been marked by the open confrontation with the curers.

The authority of the president, however,

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The authority of the president, however, depends on the use of legal sanctions of prison sentences and fines imposed by extracommunity enforcement agencies in the departmental capital. The weakness of these sanctions—the fine for homicide is 1,000 to 3,000 pesos or three to five years' imprisonment—means that these threats do not have a controlling effect on people's decisions to act. Homicide, carried out by individuals who feel themselves to be threatened, is a supplementary mechanism for social control. Cast in the idiom of witch-killing, homicide is the quasi-official execution of a community threat.

The breakdown in the former structural controls has not been compensated for by the intervention of extracommunity institutions. Attempts to circumvent killing are made by the priest, who counsels against it, warning that the killer will acquire the sins of the man he kills, and by the talking saint of Ixtapa, whom the Indians consult when they are pressed and who advises them to wait—their enemy will be killed for them. This advice is not sufficient to forestall all killings. Motivated by fear, some men still seek to eliminate the object of their fear.[7] The sense of the guardianship of the ancestors and their intermediaries, the curers, is lost along with the intervention of the civil authorities. The individual reacts, using his own means and trying to get sufficient consensus to avoid reprisal.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Homicide in the community of Teklum can be a statement of the fear of witchcraft, of revenge, or of quasi-official reprisal depending on the circumstances and social relationships involved. Even in this small, self-contained community, homicide does not have a single meaning, analyzable within a single framework of change.

Homicide is part of the expectation pattern of the town. The patterning of the acts of homicide in terms of time, place, and agent makes possible rules of avoidance both in long- and in short-term calculations for survival. The long-range rules require respect behavior to elders, equals, and juniors and the avoidance of abusive or boastful statements. The short-range rules are to avoid walking alone in the woods or milpas far from town, to stay home at night, and to stop drinking.

Despite the grim and expectable outcome of being killed, not all men heed these rules. The love of power and the projection of self into

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682 183 wider ranges of expression than are usually permitted in the community prompt men to assert the strength of their swayohel, to run races with the animal spirits of others in the assertion of pre-eminence, to boast of their material goods, and to "wake up dead."

682 694 178 578 Th increasing rate of homicide is related to the following changes in the community:

(1) Increasing friction resulting both from the introduction of new economic enterprises and from political competition by the recently settled land-reform colonies has introduced a new kind of homicide, in which an opponent is killed either by the person whose interests are threatened or [754] by hired killers. It has also stimulated accusations of witchcraft stemming from envy.

558 682 694 178 578 756 754 (2) The curers' loss of leadership and of control over entry into the curing profession has led to competition among them and to a loss of respect for their ability to overcome witchcraft. Curers have become the most frequent suspects of being witches.

(3) Loss of faith in the guardian ancestors and in the guardianship functions acquired from them by the curers has further undermined the position of the curers as agents of social control. This has aggravated the sense of insecurity and fear, which provokes the uncontrolled use of individual violence.

682 694 178 621 626 (4) The shift of power from the principales to the town president has led to a breakdown in the system of checks and balances exerted by the principales over the curers, and to a direct confrontation of the curers by civil officials.

756 682 694 756 178 626 683 (5) In the confrontations of the civil authorities and the curers in the '40's and early '50's, the fact that a witchcraft case was officially reviewed and the killing of the witch sanctioned may have served as a brake on the number of such homicides. Since 1953, when this practice was abandoned, those who have felt themselves or their families to be the victims of witchcraft have been left to their own recourse.

178 508 682 [621] 632 756 The organizational changes summarized here are provoked by structural changes affecting recruitment into the positions of power and the validation of leadership in the exercise of power. The dual division of the town provided an accepted basis for recruiting

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leaders, both in the civil authority and in the curing profession. The transition from the old hierarchy of control to the new leadership structure is still in process. In the most recent confrontation of the civil authority and curers, the fact that neither side resorted to violence suggests the transitional nature of homicide as a solution in intracommunal conflict.

This study of homicide indicates that the changing rate of behavior points to structural change, but does not in itself indicate what kind of change occurs or from what motives it stems. Qualitative case analysis related to structural changes within the recall of informants is essential for understanding social process.

[121]

NOTES

[1] Field work is based on two periods of residence in the community in 1964 and 1965; it was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health. I am grateful for comments by Paul Friedrich, Richard Henderson, Harold Scheffler, and Peter Wilson, who have improved the original version read at the 1965 meetings of the American Anthropological Association. I remain responsible for the contents of the paper.

[2] Henry and Short (1964:18) analyze both suicide and homicide as undifferentiated aggressive reactions to frustration, the rates of which vary—in the first case inversely and in the second case directly—with the strength of the external control system over behavior. Their assumption that homicide is motivationally a single phenomenon, and not an expression of a variety of motives, stems from the assumption that all cases of aggressive acts are the result of frustration. Straus and Straus (1964:587) apply a similar correlational analysis of homicide and suicide rates with structural features of society in Ceylon, but come to opposite conclusions. They maintain that one would expect greater evidence of homicide in a "loosely structured society," by which they mean one with considerable sanctioning of variation in individual behavior. These studies contradict each other in the conclusions that they reach by similar analytical processes, but they are attempts to move away from such psychoanalytic reasoning as the death-wish theory.

[3] Bohannan's (1960) survey of homicide and suicide in African societies represents a useful model for comparing the total pattern of homicide cross-culturally. In presenting the case material here, I have used a similar format, adding to it the circumstances surrounding the killing. In the analysis of these materials, I have diverged from Bohannan's model in trying to demonstrate the linkage among the components—the *ratios*, to use Burke's (1945) terminology of *scene*/setting/*actor*/agent.

[4] The term "witch" is a translation of the Tzeltal term *?ah'-lomal*, literally "giver of sickness." The term "curer" is a translation of *?a?al*. The power to cure and to give sickness stems from the possession of a *nagual*, or animal spirit.

[5] For a discussion of the tactics of gaining consensus in witch-killings, see Manning Nash (1960).

[6] Political homicide by agrarian leaders, which is so frequent in the central plateau (Friedrich 1962), is a relatively recent phenomenon in the retreat zones of Indian population. The cases analyzed by Friedrich are a strategy of political power stemming from a revolutionary background, and the cultural assumptions to which he points contrast with those underlying witch-killings. My only comparable case is, significantly, found outside the traditional center, in the new ejido colony

[7] Jules Henry (1936) sees the formula of fear and anger as the

273* court usually demands a nominal fine (10 pesos--about a day's
683 wages--being the customary amount), and sometimes the defendant will apologize as well. In one such case, the plaintiff had to have hospital care, and the defendant was ordered to pay the bill (30 pesos) instead of a fine. Where the fighting ended in
273* a death, both fine and damages are charged, as in the murder
682 case already mentioned in text above:
[539]

M. PERO ME LAHWAN YAK' TAK'IN TOHUBEH.

I wonder how much money it was settled for.

J. KINYENTOS PESO LAH YAK' HIL.

He handed over five hundred pesos.

M. ME HA* LAH SMUK Z'IN TE MAC'A CAM E.

Did he pay for the funeral of the dead man?

J. PUES MA HNA*TIK, MA YU*N LAH YA*BE SIYERO TRESYENTOS PESO.

Well, I don't know, maybe he gave him something like three hundred pesos.

M. APARTE XAN Z'IN TE KINYENTO LAH YAK'HIL E.

Apart from the five hundred that he handed over?

J. APARTE Z'IN *EHK HATE KINYENTOS PE E LAH YAK' HIL TA KABILTA.

Apart from the five hundred pesos that he handed over to the court.

682 It is important that in this case, the murderer not only paid
629 the fine and damages (through his wife) but also found it advisable to leave the community. Murder and witchcraft do not

682 627 admit of truly restitutive outcomes in Aguacatenango; an individual is dead and cannot be reclaimed, and from the point of view of the Aguacatenanguero, nothing can reduce the survivors' sense of vulnerability except another life. Furthermore, any sanction short of death or permanent expulsion from the community 682 627 692 might result in reprisals. The Aguacatenango court has no popular mandate and hence no power or desire to hand down a death sentence to a community member; the most severe sanction it can employ for a murder is a heavy fine-plus-damages. Since this sanction falls short of the family's needs, the court is rarely consulted in such cases; when such cases do come to court, they are often dismissed (sometimes on the basis of lack of evidence, for murders and witchcraft are not often observed by witnesses) or referred to the municipio court.

627 682 754 Murder and witchcraft are usually dealt with by means of penalizing strategies, most often murder or the threat of it which will drive the individual permanently out of the community. A lesser penalizing strategy--breaking off interaction--is sometimes used in such cases, particularly if the jeopardized party is weak or the evidence is inconclusive. For example, Josefa Lopez' husband was accused of doing witchcraft against a neighbor's wife. When her husband was later killed while drinking, nobody saw the killing but Josefa "knew" that the dead woman's son had done it out of vengeance. Josefa, now a widow with small

627 children and without father or brothers to support her, found it
682 impossible either to retaliate or to remain under the eye of the
754 "killer," so she moved to a distant part of the community.

598 More often, breaking interaction is used as a penalizing
627 strategy in less serious conflicts. For example, a daughter-in-law living in her husband's paternal household complained that her father-in-law scolded her when he was drunk and, in order to reduce her vulnerability, left the house and returned to live with her own family. Sometimes, in such a case, the husband will attempt to make restitution in response to the penalty and the conflict will be resolved. Another case, mentioned in text earlier, is that of Aurelia Ramirez and her unwelcome house guest; she appealed to the young man's father-in-law and had him removed from her house. The penalizing nature of this strategy is illustrated in the text which followed (also cited above); the conflict remained "active" in the relationship between Aurelia and the young man in that he returned to threaten her with witchcraft. Aurelia's next move is instructive; still feeling vulnerable, she sought the judgment of the court. However, this being a case of threat of witchcraft, the court refused to rule. She describes her rebuff as follows:

[692] [754]

[537] KIK' Z'IN KALBE LO*L SME*L NEAL, KOMO PRESIDENTE.

I went out to speak to his father-in-law, since he is president.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

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"Don't give any more money. The Ejido Commission won't let the division happen since we are the same pueblo."

The four principales returned from Mexico. They said that they had a paper and that an engineer would come. They asked for another contribution of 25 pesos. They said that those who wouldn't pay would be thrown out. Pablo came and told us. We told him not to be afraid. The principales now knew that Pablo was with us. He had two brothers, Pancho and Ignacio, whom he advised not to go along with the principales since he knew that they would not win the case. When the principales returned to ask for more money for their trips to Tuxtla, both brothers refused.

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Since these three brothers did not cooperate, the principales got angry and decided to kill Pablo. One day, when Pablo was on his way to Teopisca, he was shot in the back. He continued riding 76 meters. The horse returned to his house. His wife ran to tell his two brothers that the horse had come home without a rider. The brothers ran out and found Pablo dead. The civil authorities of the town went. A few days pasied. The brothers never asked for justice. But since they knew who did it, one of them took Pablo's 16-centimeter rifle. Pablo's wife had been thinking of selling it to pay for the expenses of the funeral. Pancho [Pablo's brother] said, "No wait. I will buy it as soon as I have money."

He borrowed it for several years. One Sunday there was an order for all of the people of San Caralampio to go to the pueblo. They got up early and wakened all the others with a horn. Pancho got up with his rifle. He went to Juan's house and shot him. Luciano had Pancho jailed in the department capitol. He declared his crime, and said that he had killed Juan because the latter had shot his brother. He made a good statement. For this reason, he got out very cheaply—1500 pesos—which he paid with his crop of beans and corn. He was in prison in San Caralampio three months. Now he lives in Teopisca. His sons go to work there, but he doesn't. One day, Pancho was shot in the back—I don't know how many centimeters the bullet penetrated, but he did not die. The brothers of Juan and José have all left the colonia.

José was the one who caused all of the trouble. His wife was the younger sister of Pablo and she left him. Now José is going around begging for food to eat.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

as the direct agents of the ancestors, guarded the streets of their own side of the dual division. The judges, with the supervision of the principales, were responsible for guarding against the abuse of power by the curers or others possessing a swayohel in their review of witchcraft cases in the town hall. The three sets of functionaries—ancestors, curers, and judges—are classified in a lexicon of role function in the stem *me? . . tat . . ,* common to the terms applied to them, me?tiktatik, me?iltatil, and me?ctatel.[3]

The system of control over the use of power has been in a state of uneasy tension. In a series of incidents recounted below, the growing suspicion that the judges and the principales were not countering the witches because of their fear of falling victim to them, and that the curers themselves were exercising the witchcraft becomes apparent.

In the following case, the system of checks and balances was upset by the entry into the presidency in 1940 of Mam Nicolás, the leading curer of Allannantik. Nicolás combined the skills of operating in the traditional culture with those of dealing with the Ladino world. Despite the fact that he was a graduate of the boarding school operating in the town in the 1930s, which had far more extensive effects in acculturation as well as formal education than any prior school, he practiced curing. The case is recounted by Ceferino, the scribe:

Formerly the dead president Mam Nicolás left at midday from the town hall and went to his house where he ate a meal. A neighbor, Francisco, came to talk to him. They drank a half a liter of trago, and then began to drink a second and got drunk. They began to say goodbye, and Francisco left Nicolás' house. When Nicolás saw that Francisco went out, he grabbed his shotgun. He saw that Francisco was now far away, and he fired many shots. One got him right in his back. When Francisco felt it, he shouted. The police heard him and went to get the judges who came to see also. His [Francisco's] wife came. She raised his head and cried when she saw he was dead. An elder sister brought a new mat to carry him.

3. The suffixes *-el,* and *-ik* refer to pronominal forms, as in "you judges" and "our ancestors." *-il* is an article, as in "the curers." In prayer, the ancestors may be addressed in the second person, or the judges may be referred to with the first-person-plural possessive, but these forms are rare in those contexts.

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carry him. When the new mat arrived, the judge ordered that he be brought to his house. The judges saw that the shot had entered well. They ordered the police to seize Nicolás and put him in prison. They saw that Francisco died.

The night entered, and the judges ordered the police to guard the killer throughout the night. At dawn he remained in prison and stayed there the entire day. On the third day, they "took his heart" [questioned him] to see what his crime was. He said that Francisco had blamed him for giving witchcraft and that it was not his fault, that he was not a witch. He got angry and shot Francisco. The judge heard the case and raised an act. They sent him to San Cristóbal and the síndico, Simón, took over the presidency. He remained in power in the pueblo.

People heard that the new president could not arrange things in the town hall. Illness entered the pueblo. Word was left that Juan, Ebaristo, and Antonio had brought in the illness. All those who "knew how to make fiestas" [reference to curers functioning in curing ritual] gathered together in the town hall. The two leading curers came with a garrafón of liquor. The curers drank until nighttime.

The president remained in prison. When the night had entered well, he slept. And although he had heard many rumors about what was going to happen, he slept well. At dawn, the president was "of one heart" [content]. A policeman arrived and said that Antonio had been brought to jail.

"Why?" asked the president. "For what crime has he been put in prison?"

The policeman said that it was for witchcraft, and that they had gone out to get the other witch Juan, but he had escaped into the Cave of the Star. Although there were fifteen men after him, they couldn't seize him. They had also gone to catch Ebaristo, but he was not in his house, and they did not find him. The crime of the three was that they had brought in the illness.

Meanwhile, everyone was saying that Nicolás was also responsible for letting the illness in the town. People said that he had vowed that if the authorities seized him, he would let in the illness. The townspeople got drunk.

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Eight men of Alannantik wanted the interim president, Simón to remain as president. But the people of Ahk'olnantik did not want him to remain as president. The townspeople began to talk, saying, "Why should he remain as president since he stole twenty bulls? We don't want him. Let us get another president. We shall walk with Ceferino."

They wanted me for president since I was first regidor. It is for this reason that I entered as president, but I didn't think that I would be able to stay on as president. Simón received an order from the [state] government that he should return as president. He came with soldiers, and when they took me out of office, the lieutenant said to Simón, "Now you enter."

And so I gave over the archives and seals and everything in the presidency to Simón, and I left the presidency. And the people saw that it was the order of the government, and they did not say anything. The town remained silent.

The incident is given as it was related to me in Tzeltal. I have sorted out the steps in which the conflict developed in order to clarify its meaning.

1. The traditional checks and balance system of the civil authority over the curers was initially upset by the entry of a leading curer into the post of president.

2. When he committed a murder while in office, the judges seized control and had him put in prison.

3. His replacement by the síndico who was from the same side of the dual division, aroused the opposition of the people of the opposite side, Ahk'olmantik, who believed that the epidemic, which followed the president's removal from power, was caused by the curers of Alannantik under the direction of the president who was in jail.

4. The leaders of the revolt in Ahk'olnantik chose as their replacement the first regidor, Ceferino, who was from their side.

5. Leaders from Alannantik rejected this replacement and were able to get official backing from the state government to replace their representative.

The process illustrates the way in which a conflict, precipitated by a clash between civil authorities and the curers, was cast into the idiom of struc-

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When he arrived here, he did not hear any word that they would kill him. He persisted in his custom of stealing. And the pueblo seized him and put him in prison. The whole town seized him although he had heard no word.

They tied him to a tree and said to him, "You do not have shame. You are a curer, father of the pueblo, [respect term for curer], and yet you behaved badly and truly stole. The town sees you are a bad man, Emilio. They call you their father, but now I am going to tell you that you ought not to be called father. You're a bad one."

He wanted to be called father, but he was only a bad one. He returned again to San Cristóbal because of two crimes. He did not hear the words. He remained in prison, and when he came out someone else came and killed him.

Since 1938, nine of the thirty-seven homicide cases on which I collected data (Table 29) were killings of curers. The increasing frequency of such killings reveals the loss of faith in the guardianship role of the curers, but along with this, retention of belief in their power to work evil.

In the series of successful confrontations, the civil authority has gained strength and overcome some of the fear of the people. In May 1964, during a severe contagion of measles, a rumor started that the disease was being spread because of witchcraft. The president called together the curers. The consensus of this gathering was that a certain curer of Alannantik had buried the "heat" which was causing the deaths in the milpa of his enemy. The people of Alannantik gathered with the curers and the civil officials in the milpa of the "enemy" to dig it out. The curers dug out a charcoal brazier which is the sign of illness and threw it in the Cave of the Star. That evening the suspected witch was killed, presumably by his neighbors.

In the most recent confrontation between the civil authorities and an individual curer, in March 1966, the civil authorities showed a united front in denouncing the use of witchcraft to threaten any official. The entire group of practicing curers from both sides of the dual division were called to witness the denunciation before the assembled civil officials in the town hall. The only one absent was the curer accused of attempting to cut short the life of the president because of envy of his position. The assembled

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support of whatever is said—repeating the final phrase of the person conversing or injecting supportive statements such as "indeed, indeed," or "so it is." In the dance of the alfereces' wives, for example, women were the model of deference, moving in a self-contained pattern before the assembled guests, with slow, tiny steps, eyes downcast, a shawl covering their heads on which they wore their husbands' ceremonial hats.

Through recruitment procedures, alternation and linkage in official roles, and leadership validated by age and service in lower positions—principles applying to role relations in all institutions—Tzo'ontahal has remained an integrated community. There is a high degree of stereotyping in behavior from one institution to another, and norms of behavior are the same for public as for private roles. However, a remarkably high homicide rate and open conflict in all of the institutional settings indicate basic sources of disruption.

Since 1960 the rate of homicide in town has increased from an average of 1 every 2 years to an average of 5 or 6 per year. Table 20 indicates the role relationships of killer to victim in 37 of over 70 homicides occurring between 1937 and 1964. The highest incidence of homicide (7 cases) occurred between brothers and brothers-in-law. Male siblings comprise the closest cooperating group. Brothers work together in the milpa until the father dies or divides his property among his children during his lifetime. Bilateral inheritance with equal division of land and houses among female as well as male offspring means that brothers-in-law are potential competitors for the same limited resources. Friction arising among brothers and brothers-in-law does not come from the principle of equal inheritance, but rather because of the fact of differing responsibilities and expenses within the family. For example, the child who has remained with the parents and thus assumes the burden of care for them in their declining years often feels that he should inherit a greater share. The disputes arise in the decisions concerning how much this disadvantage should be weighted. The suppression of overt competition may in part explain the homicidal acts. Although the tensions in fact stem from suppressed economic competition, they are translated into witchcraft accusations as soon as anyone in the family becomes ill. Violence against a witch is condoned by the community and provides a channel for latent hostility. Once the accusation has

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been made, there is no recourse but to kill the man since he may retaliate by killing his accuser (this occurred in two of the cases noted in Table 29).

Conflict between generations in the role sets father/son and father/son-in-law stems from delay in carrying out role responsibilities. Fathers are expected to provide the money for the costs of betrothal, and to give their children shares of the patrimony including both land and livestock. The scheduling of when this should occur is often a matter of dispute, resulting in at least two cases of homicide in the period analyzed.

New economic enterprises have exacerbated the tensions rising from envy. Foster (1965) has suggested that envy stems from the notion of the "limited good," requiring the strategy of a "zero sum game" (Bennet 1966). The fact that the new wealth is evidence of new opportunities, not a subtraction from a given resource supply, has not entered the cognitive awareness of the people. The prospering leaders of these enterprises feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to the envy of others and thus to the charge of witchcraft. There have been several open attacks on new leaders accused as witches; the leader of the truck cooperative, for example, was murdered in 1966. Six men have been killed as cattle thieves in the past ten years.

The economic roles created with the introduction of new enterprises have not been integrated in the traditional pattern of recruitment and control. In the association of cattle breeders, leadership tends to be based on the size of the herd; in the case of the truck cooperative, amount of capital invested and entrepreneurial skills have determined the leadership of the enterprise, while driving skill and ability to get along in the Ladino world has been the basis for choice of drivers. Such achievement principles as the basis for recruitment into these envied positions are not accepted in the same way that age and passage through a hierarchy of posts validated higher positions in the old hierarchies. The conspicuous expenditure of wealth in the more expensive posts in the religious hierarchy has also failed to lessen hostility aroused by the increasing disparity in wealth, and in fact those who have served as alférez have been even more subject to witchcraft aroused by envy.

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The following list of moral transgressions is roughly ordered in terms of the egregiousness of the crime: witchcraft, theft of cattle, theft of corn, "talking with" a woman (this is a euphemism for having an affair), having more than one wife, killing, and disrespect to parents. There is a fair amount of consistency in the rank order given by different informants. Of five people questioned, all ranked witchcraft first, and theft, without qualification as to what was stolen, second. Subjects questioned differentiated the crime of "talking with" a woman according to the status of the woman —it was worse to have relations with a married woman than with an unmarried girl or with a widow. Killing was listed late or not at all by some because it is assumed that the killer has cause unless the contrary is proved. The dead man is referred to as the guilty one. It is considered worse to kill a consanguineous relative than an affinal relative or a nonrelative. One man remarking on an incident in which a person lost his bull said: "It was a punishment of God for killing his father. If it had been his stepfather, it would be different." Wanton killing is said to be absent in the pueblo, and something that the kurik of the colonias do. The three murders in the past ten years resulting from barroom brawls between "friends" have not dispelled this notion.

Disrespect shown to parents is considered a serious violation of morality. A boy who refuses to listen to his father cannot expect to receive the protection and support of his parents, usually offered a child throughout their lifetime, or of the community. If the son abuses his father verbally or physically in public, the father is supported in whatever action he takes. One father, whose son kicked him in one of the local bars, drew applause when he made the sign of the cross in two deep gashes with his machete on his son's forehead. To beat one's father or mother is a great sin, but to beat one's wife is tolerated, particularly if it is done in drunkenness. If a man other than the husband beats a woman for any cause, she may reciprocate by beating him in court "before the eyes of the judges." One woman who was awarded this privilege when her husband's brother beat her said, "If he were my own husband, it would be all right for him to beat me."

The good man is "of one heart" and reveals it by his humility ("very soft heart"). The rules for demonstrating this are given by an old man who is frequently asked to be a nakawane in his section of the dual divi-

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old and do not have as much opportunity to project their personalities in larger than life terms. Ladinas of the neighboring towns are given nicknames: Me? Sobol for example, was named for her habit of saying when she was drunk, "No soy bola" (I am not drunk); Me? Č'ič'el, meaning Mother Blood, was applied to a woman who sold blood of slaughtered animals.

Behavior is not believed to be totally dependent on innate traits, and the Indians emphasize the socialization processes. A badly behaved youth was said in court to "behave as though he did not have a mother," and to lack fear of his parents. The sense of shame and fear begin at home, and the community relies on the family to instill these controlling influences on behavior.

Notions of Justice and Compensation

Notions of immanent justice, whether acquired from the priest or indigenous beliefs, are peripheral to the morality system. Crimes should be paid for not in suffering, guilt, or remorse, but in fines exacted by the communal authority. Every crime has its price, and most people agree that it is good to be able to pay in money and be exonerated. The scale of values assigned in the fines for crimes is some index to the relative weight given them:

Stealing a bull: 500 to 1,200 pesos, depending on value of bull.
Stealing a turkey: 40 to 70 pesos, depending on value of turkey.
Stealing a horse: 300 to 500 pesos, depending on value of horse.

The range of fines for each act of theft indicates that justice is exacted on the basis of market value of the item stolen. The fine for murder is 1,600 to 3,000 pesos or two to eight years in prison when a killer is captured by the federal authorities. Local authorities rarely try to find the killer. In the thirty-seven cases of homicide analyzed in the period from 1938 to 1965 (Table 29)[1] only two resulted in federal action.

People express doubt about the priest's warning that those who do evil will reap the wages of sin in this life or the next regardless of whether they are found guilty. The pragmatic basis for this conclusion is revealed

1 (see pp.245-247..Analyst)

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577 in the following statement by a man who admitted to me that he had 682 killed two men:

The padre said that those who kill will get killed. The one who kills also receives all the guilt of his victim and will have to pay for it in the after-world. But my father said that when he was a policeman, there was a man in Tejonero who killed for nothing when he got drunk. He always carried a knife and would kill anyone around. However, he lived until he was very old. Therefore I do not believe the padre.

577 Concern about the afterworld does not act as a deterrent to action in this 775 world.

783 Most men ignore the priest's attempts to persuade them to go to confes- 794 sion. Women, especially the prayer-reciters, confess and take communion. Their confessions, according to the priest, are a recitation of the sins of their husbands or their neighbors.

273 Drinking is often given as a defense for failing to meet standards of be- 577 havior. While this serves to excuse minor infractions, a man is supposed to be responsible for his actions even when drunk. When one policeman started a fight in public, an elder judge commented to my informant:

Look at that, younger brother! I drink liquor when I am very drunk, but I do not fight either my elders or minors. When I passed as president formerly, I used to enter the cabildo, and I spoke well to the judges even if I was drunk. One time I came to your house very drunk and you were half drunk, but you did not say anything to me, nor did I. You did not fight. Thus I walk well. I never fight, nor have I gone to prison, and it is because I give respect to my elders and to my juniors.

Reflecting on this advice, my informant added:

And so it is with me also. I have drunk a great deal in Ahk'olnantik [the opposite section from where he lives] both at day and at night. Whoever speaks to me tells me to go drink with them a little liquor, and sometimes I give them a drink or I take them where they sell liquor and we drink. But I never fight, and I am able to drink wherever I like.

626 The community has developed techniques for compensating failure to 273 meet behavioral norms. The most frequently used is an offering of the 431

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"gift of the gods," liquor, to the party whose interests have been slighted. This is done in the case of a suitor who is asking for a woman of the other side of the dual division; he gives the bachelors of that side a garrafón of liquor in compensation for the loss of a potential mate. Liquor has become a substitute for the sacrifice of a child by a man being initiated into the curing profession. Informal offerings of liquor may be made between neighbors or relatives who have been fighting with each other. Liquor is a kind of universal social solvent in disputes, and figures importantly in court cases which are always terminated in a drinking session.

Another technique is simply a payment in money to compensate for damages. In some homicide cases, the payment of "blood money" has compensated the family of the victim to avoid legal action. This is never done, however, if the community agrees that the victim was a witch. Payment of fines in court is another such form of compensation. These payments or offerings minimize the bloodshed or personal involvement in conflictual relations. Payment by the man judged guilty will ensure his reincorporation into his customary place in the community without stigma.

While it is impossible to elicit from informants a theory of roles, it is possible to formulate the principles underlying roles. These are deduced from behavioral observations and from evaluations made of the performances of others. They can be summarized in the following propositions:

1. There is a clear separation between role and role-bearer. This is seen most clearly in the passage through civil and religious offices with a minimum of "halo" effect. It is also found in the situation of household officials whose authority in directing affairs within a household ceases when the ceremony in which they officiate is over. The separation ensures flexibility in a closed social system, enabling people to shift from one role to another. It also permits continuity in a system which requires an almost complete turnover of personnel each year.

2. Function performed is separate from role in which it is performed. This applies even in those roles which are designated on the basis of the most important function required of the performer, for example woman speaker, liquor measurer, and basket carrier. All of

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programs in the interest of "civilizing" the Indians. This formulation involved a basic contradiction between the goal of moving into regional and national networks and that of keeping the old autonomy and independence of the corporate community. He never had to face that contradiction. Unable to gain adherents other than the small group of profit-sharers in the cooperative he organized, he was killed by opponents within the community.

The Family and Household

The core of the traditional culture lay in the local power hierarchies patterned on the familial model of age-ordered paternal authority institutionalized in the me?iltatil. The me?iltatil of the household have provided a flexible institution for adjusting conflict within the kin group. Their role in directing ritual performances preserves a sense of continuity in life cycle changes.

The institutionalized authority of the elders has not been upset by the trend toward residence based on nuclear families, which is an adjustment to the pressure of limited space in the town center. Kinship ties are continually reinforced by rituals that draw together the me?iltalil as sponsors of ceremonies marking baptism, marriage, and death. This group of sponsoring relatives has absorbed the institution of compadrazgo, adding compadres to the network of affinally-and bilaterally-related kin. The procedures for adjusting conflict among members of the household and extended family networks reinforce the authority of the elders. When adjustive processes in the house and court "arrangements" and in curing ceremonies fail, the only recourse is for one of the disputants to leave the community or commit homicide.

Ceremonies within the household provide a model for the rules of the game that apply to adjustive behavior in the community. The household officials introduce new officials into their role, teaching them the prayers and directing the proceedings. Their authority depends upon age and prestige acquired in office. The me?iltatil, as the elders of the family, are the direct link with the ancestors. They and the nakawane provide the strongest force for preserving the ways of the ancestors.

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Tzo?ontahal

Thus the social control is exerted through the traditional hierarchy, but the benefits of the labor go toward the priest's projects. The priest speaks with some satisfaction of the increasing control the "church" (he) has over the people. He maintains that this is because the people are more "civilized." For him, the indices to civilization are the facts that there is no drinking in the church, there is greater attendance at Mass, and more people are wearing Ladino clothing.

The second divergence in the elicited and observed accounts for the religious inauguration occurred when the civil officials, including the town secretary and síndico, assisted the religious officials in counting the money collected for the fiesta.

An important supplement to the behavorial data were the unsolicited comments of informants. Their anecdotes often gave me clues to their involvement in the gamesmanship of operating within culturally defined patterns. Although the informant focuses on the formal question, his growing boredom with the sequence (Who sat next to him? What did they do next? Who was there?) leads him to muse about the associated ideas and images which did interest him, often self-damaging or negative aspects of the culture which he might want to hide if questioned directly. The technique resembles that of the astronomer instructing the novice stargazer: "If you want to see the Pleiades, look at Jupiter, and out of the corner of your eye the nebulous cluster of stars of the Pleiades becomes visible."

The following illustrates how this free association emerged in the formal eliciting procedure:

Informant 2 constantly reiterated the danger his brother would encounter in undertaking the post of president as we discussed inauguration procedures. For example, when he gave me a list of participants at the Judge's house when his father took on that post, he mentioned the name of a widow, Cika, and provided the unsolicited information that her husband had been shot on December 16, 1963, the fiesta of Halal Me?tik Santalusia. Informant's statement: "He did not know he had an enemy, and so he walked alone that night. Each fiesta someone is killed. During the fiesta of San Francisco this year, another man in Bočibal was killed. No one knows why. He was knifed with a machete. I never go out alone at night because of the fights with the cooperative. They [the members of the opposing cooperative] are very hard (*ha? ben bolik*). They claim they will kill us."

What prompted the next revelation was my com-

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Tzo?ontahal

ment, engrossed as I was in the task of eliciting the formal sequence of events, "Quiet, S.; let's get on with the fiesta." He persisted in what interested him. 124

Eleven years ago they [who? enemies?] tried to get me. I had a piece of land in hot country. My house here was not ready, but the wood was ready. M. C. a neighbor was jealous [*šil yo?tan*, 'saw his heart']. He had caused another neighbor's illness. He was my wife's *mu?* [literally 'brother-in-law,' in this case the informant's wife's fa's sis's husband]. He didn't have corn or beans. He was jealous because of my crops and the big house I was going to build. 124 578 [754] [601] [602]

By now I was asking questions and taking notes. I interposed, "How did you know?" 124 578

I knew because when I got sick, the curer (who was the dead husband of the widow who came to the judges' house) told me. The *cabron* (goat) witches leave their signature in the blood *(yak hilel firma ta čič?)*. Then I went to a curer in Chamula who confirmed it. 754 756

"How did he speak to you?" 124

In Tzotzil. Then I went to Las Casas. Another curer, also a Chamulteco, said, "Here is his signature in your blood. He is working alone." On January 7 I fell in bed. All month from January to the 19th of April I was very sick. I went to Cruz Quemada (colonia of Tzo?ontahal) where F. G. cured me. He burned candles at the curing arch and prayed. 578 755 756 [782]

"Whom did he pray to?"

The hills, the holy land. Then I got well, but I was very tired. My Swana [wife, Juana] told me "He is going to kill you." I had a rifle. I filled it and went out, but then I returned. Another day I took two measures of trago, took my rifle and went to his house. He was sleeping with his wife close to him in bed, the way we sleep here. I fired four times. The bullets went in his back and came out front. One entered the arm of his wife. Now people say of me I am a killer. I went to the townhall for the enquiry. The man's wife said the door [of the house] was open. She said she did not see me. Afterward I got well. If I hadn't killed him, I never would have lived. Now I am having more trouble first because of the cooperative, then because of my brother being president, and then the comisario. Let us see what will happen this year. If God lends us our life, there are going to be protests. We will walk with our pistols. Špet [wife of Ladino owner of opposing cooperative] gave 1000 pesos to a man from Magronal to kill me. 124 578 682

"How do you know?"

My compadre came and told me. Who knows how many deaths there will be!

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"Why don't you call in the civil guard?" 124

They will say we are women, that we are afraid. My brother wants to, however. 578 682

He communicated several things in this deviation from the eliciting schedule:

Many assassinations are committed regularly in Tzo?ontahal.
They usually occur at fiestas.
The only recourse is to kill one's enemy.
I am a killer, therefore I am prepared to protect myself.
Everyone knows I am a killer.
When I killed, it wasn't a murder but an execution.

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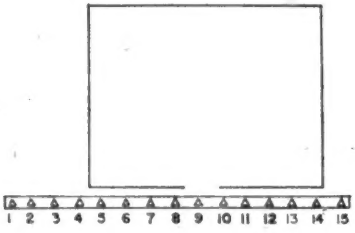

CHART 13 — HOUSE OF THE COFRADE OF THE VIRGIN SANTA LUCIA, FIESTA OF SAN PEDRO SAN PABLO (OBSERVED)

OFFICIALS:

1 Cofrade of Virgin Santa Lucia *(Kobraria Halal Me?tik)*
2 Elder of San Pedro Martyr *(Tatil Yu?un Martil)*
3 Assistant junior for Sacramento *(Ali?bal Nič'nal yu?un Sakramentú)*
4 Assistant junior for Virgin Santa Lucia *(Ali?bal Nič'nal yu?un Halal Me?tik)*
5 Elder for the Christ of the Ascension *(Tatil yu?un Tatik Sanpransiskú)*
6 Elder for San Antonio *(Tatil yu?un Sanantonió)*
7 Elder for Virgin Rosarió *(Tatil Halal Me?tik Rosario)*
8 Elder for Santiago *(Tatil yu?un Santiagú)*
9 Elder for San Jose *(Tatil yu?un Sanhosé)*
10 Junior for San Antonio *(Nič'nal yu?un Sanantonió)*
11 Junior for Santiago *(Nič'nal yu?un Santiagú)*
12 Junior for San Pedro Martyr *(Nič'nal yu?un Martil)*
13 Junior for Virgin Rosario *(Nič'nal yu?un Me?tik Rosario)*
14 Junior for San Jose *(Nič'nal yu?un Sanhosé)*
15 Junior for Christ of the Ascension *(Nič'nal yu?un Sanpransiskú)*

Since the informant expected that there might be an attempt made on his life in the approaching inaugural ceremony, he was advertising his own strength and willingness to defend himself even if it meant killing his enemy. I was an audience for him to try on poses of self-assertion. 124 578 [123]

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Tzo?ontahal

The struggle for political office within the community is a response to regional and national power centers. Behavior in this struggle is alien to responses controlled in ritual or structured performances. The strategies developed in these situations fit the pattern of political homicide more typical of the Indian towns of the central plateau (Friedrich, 1964) than of the highland Chiapas area.

CHANGE OF OFFICIALS

621 *
178
156
[682] •
[171]

[P 226-B]